GETTING ACQUAINTED

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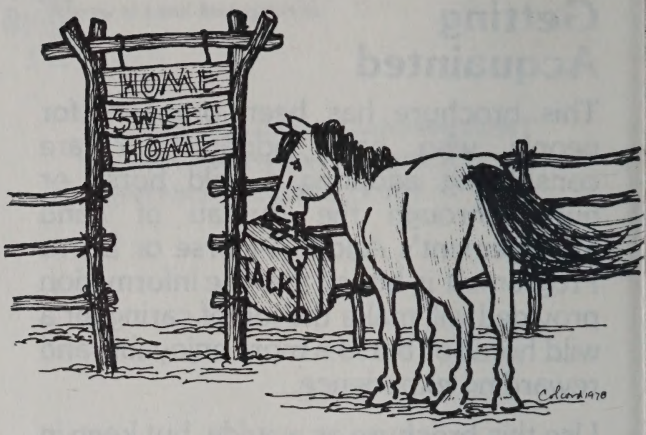
Getting Acquainted

This brochure has been prepared for people who have adopted or are considering adopting a wild horse or burro through the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Horse or Burro Program. It is hoped that the information provided will make the job of caring for a wild horse or burro a more enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Use this brochure as a guide, but keep in mind that each animal's needs can vary. You should work with your veterinarian to develop a diet and health regimen to meet your animal's specific requirements.



The First Few Days

The first few days after adopting a wild horse or burro will probably be the most tense. A wild horse or burro is just as its name suggests—"WILD." As a result, extreme caution must be exercised when handling the animal during this period, to avoid injury to both the adoptor and the wild horse or burro. If done properly, the remaining time spent together should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

As soon as the wild horse or burro arrives at its new home, it should be confined to a small corral of sturdy construction. It is inadvisable to turn the animal into a large pasture or confine it in an enclosed stall until it has been gentled. If possible, a "break away" halter should be placed on the animal with about 15 feet of lead rope dragging behind. This will allow for restraining the animal should the need arise and will aid in establishing physical contact at a safe distance.

Food and water should be provided sometime during the day the animal arrives home.

The next few weeks will be the period when the animal becomes accustomed to its new home and the process of gentling can begin. Gentling can best be accomplished by spending as much time with the animal as possible. Spend time around the corral to get the animal used to human activity. Talk to the animal and begin to gain its confidence by providing food and water. As time goes on, the animal should cease to frantically avoid human presence and eventually, it may be possible to talk and move about inside the corral without causing panic. Always remember that initially wild horses and burros will consider humans as a source of danger and may react violently if they feel threatened.

To prevent being kicked, run over or bitten, maintain a safe distance and keep loud noises and quick movements to a minimum.

The process of gentling will never be complete until physical contact with the animal has been established. It is difficult to describe when it is totally safe to begin physical contact with a wild horse or burro. However, with close observation of the animal's behavior, it should be possible to obtain a feeling as to the time when physical contact can begin. In many instances, this time will be when it is possible to approach closely without causing undue alarm to the horse or burro.

To begin physical contact, start by approaching slowly and talking softly. While holding the lead rope in one hand, attempt to touch the animal lightly on it s neck. Repeat

this touching for several days and gradually begin to touch more of the body. As time goes on increase body contact until it is possible to touch or rub every part of the body without causing alarm. It is important that the animal's feet be considered in this process and physical contact should proceed to the point that it is possible to lift all four of the legs. Adequate handling of the feet and legs in early training will greatly aid in foot trimming and shoeing later on.

Building a House. . .

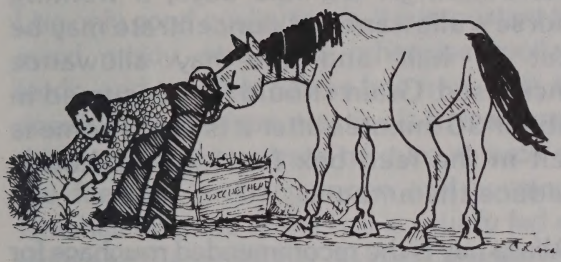
Elaborate shelter for horses and burros is not required, but some protection from the weather is desirable. Simple three-sided buildings with shed-type roofs are adequate if the open side is away from prevailing wind and rain. Local farm advisors can supply plans for horse barns. These plans may be more elaborate than necessary but will provide ideas for possible shelter construction.

When animals are kept in box or tie stalls, the stalls must be cleaned daily to prevent thrush, a fungus disease affecting the feet. Manure should be disposed of promptly to prevent fly problems. Remember that animals confined to a stall must have exercise so a daily program should be planned.

Corrals are essential facilities for housing and handling horses and burros. When space is available, corrals should be located close to the stall and be large

enough to provide an exercise area. Corrals should be at least six (6) feet high and 24 x 24 feet to allow room for exercise. They should be constructed of pipes, poles, or wooden planks. *A wild horse or burro should never be released into a barbed wire enclosure, because of the danger of severe injury.* Animals can also catch hooves and shoes in woven wire and damage their feet. Electric fences can cause animals to panic, resulting in serious injury. Once the animal is tamed and accustomed to its surroundings, wire can be used, but it is better to use other fencing materials.

Include plenty of clean, fresh water in plans for shelters and corrals. Locate tanks and automatic devices where they may be drained and cleaned easily and not be a hazard to the animals. Avoid mangers and water troughs with sharp edges or squared corners.



Feeding

Each horse or burro is different in temperment and weight, and in general is worked irregularly. Therefore, feed requirements vary to keep an animal in condition for its required work.

For simplicity, feeds are classified into roughage and concentrates, usually grain. Roughages are feeds that are high in fiber and relatively low in digestible nutrients. Concentrates are feeds that are low in fiber and high in digestible nutrients.

In general, horses or burros digest about 50 percent of all roughages and 75 percent of all grains. If 15 pounds of excellent roughage are being fed, the animal is getting about 7½ pounds of digestible material or nutrients. It is true that many roughages lack quality and may be only 30 percent or less digestible. Thus, about 25 pounds would be necessary to furnish the required amount of nutrients.

Idle animals can be kept on fairly good quality roughage or on pasture, but an animal at work may need some grain. The harder the work, the greater the proportion of concentrate required. However, overfeeding is dangerous and a recently adopted animal should not be given grain until it is well adapted to its new surroundings. On idle days, a working horse's allowance of concentrate may be cut in half and the hay allowance increased. Grain should be consumed in about 30 minutes after it is fed. If some is left in the feed box for 1 ½ to 2 hours, reduce the amount.

Alfalfa hay is the recommended roughage for wild horses and burros. Alfalfa is an excellent feed for roughage because of its high protein and calcium content and its value as a source of vitamins A and D. However, animals may tend to eat too much of it because it is tasty. Therefore, the amount fed should be limited. Feed animals that are not accustomed to alfalfa a small quantity at first, and increase gradually until it accounts for up to one-half of the roughage allowance.

Other types of hay may also be fed to wild horses or burros if the need arises. Oat hay for example, is a popular roughage in some areas. Good quality oat hay may consist of one-third grain. As a result, when oat hay is fed, the concentrate ration should be reduced accordingly. Grass hays may also make suitable roughages. Some examples are meadow grass and sudangrass. Regardless of the type of hay fed, it should be placed in a manger or hay rack. If thrown on the ground it may be trampled and wasted.

Oats are the most popular grain, and may make up a part, or even all, of the concen-

trate ration. Oats can be whole, rolled, or coarsely ground. Wheat bran is a popular feed in combination with grains. It is higher in protein than the cereals, high in phosphorus, and is slightly laxative.

Because it is bulky, the addition of bran to the ration may reduce the danger of too-rapid eating.

Use only good quality feeds. It is important to avoid moldy, musty, or otherwise spoiled feeds, and to select hay as free from dust as possible. A common practice is to feed one-third of the concentrate mixture at each of the feedings morning, noon and evening. One-half or more of the hay is usually fed at night and the remainder divided between the other two feedings. If hay is fed only twice daily, about two-thirds is fed at night.

The wise use of pasture will conserve labor, feed, and bedding. Turning animals on pasture at night and on idle days is a common practice. When grazing is not feasible, such as in the winter when pasture quality is poor, provide other green feed. Succulent feed, such as pasture grasses, is laxative; the animals must become accustomed to these feeds gradually.

Be sure that salt is available. When grain is fed, include 2 pounds of salt for each 100 pounds of grain mixture. A convenient method is to place a block of salt in a manger, corral, or pasture where the animals may eat what they need.

Have fresh water available. Do not permit an animal that has been recently exercised to drink its fill of cold water; a light drink will refresh him.

If animals are not doing well on the rations provided, make a change in quantity or kind of feed.

The change from one feed to another should be gradual in order to prevent any possible digestive disturbances.

The table below shows recommended feed allowances for different types of horses. Study it carefully before trying to determine the correct feed for any particular animal.

RECOMMENDED FEED ALLOWANCES FOR HORSES & BURROS

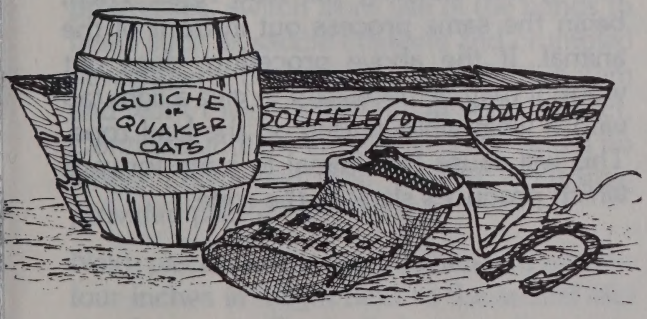
Kind of Work	For Each 100 lbs. Weight Roughage	Grain	TDN[3]
Idle	1½	None	¾
Light Work	1½	1/3	1
Medium Work	1½	2/3	1¼
Heavy Work	1½	1	1½
Idle Mares with Nursing Foals	1½	1/3	1
Growing Colts After Weaning	1½	1	1½

All figures are in pounds.

Kind of Work	For a 1,000 lb. Animal Rough-age	Grain	DM[1]	DP[2]	TDN[3]
Idle	15	None	13	¾	7½
Light Work	15	3 1/3	16	1	10
Medium Work	15	6 2/3	19	1¼	12½
Heavy Work	15	10	22	1½	15
Idle Mares with Nursing Foals	15	3 1/3	16	1¼	10
Growing Colts After Weaning	15	10	22	1¾	15

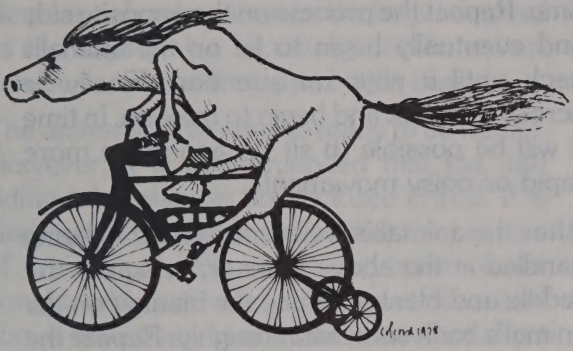
All figures are in pounds. [1]Dry Matter; [2]Digestible Protein; [3]Total Digestible Nutrients.

NOTE: If an animal has been recently weaned or is under 1 year old, it should have a conditioner (such as calf manna or 707) with its grain as a daily diet.



Teaching to Lead

When a wild horse or burro is sufficiently gentle, it can be taught to lead. To begin this process, a halter and lead rope should be placed on the animal. With the lead rope in hand, step to one side, give a light pull and slack immediately. This should cause the animal to take one or two steps to the side and forward. Never exert a steady pull on the lead rope. Keep the rope slack when the animal is doing what is desired. Repeat this process from both sides of the animal until it can be easily turned around either way by pulling and slacking the lead rope. Then, begin the same process out in front of the animal. If the above procedure does not work, it may be necessary to give a light tap with a whip while pulling on the lead rope. This will cause the animal to jump forward which produces slack in the rope.



Breaking to Ride

The process of breaking a wild horse or burro to ride requires considerable time and patience. For those who do not know how to break a wild horse or burro, it is recommended that the services of an experienced trainer be obtained. However, for those who wish to attempt breaking a horse or burro on their own, the following discussion may prove useful.

After the animal is sufficiently gentle, begin rubbing lightly over every part of its body. Gradually become more rough and as time progresses, switch from use of the hands to items such as saddle blankets and crumpled newspapers. Begin gradually with each item and work toward more rough body contact. Continue until the animal loses fear and is no longer concerned with what is occurring, provided pain is not inflicted.

Next, place a box or stool eighteen to twenty-four inches in height next to the animal and stand upon it. Gradually begin to lean over

and pat the opposite side from ears to tail, talking all the while. Begin to put some weight across the withers and back while lying across the animal. Stay only a few seconds at first, then repeat daily staying longer each time. Repeat the process on the opposite side and eventually begin to lie on the animal's back until it pays no attention. Finally lie across the back and begin to raise up. In time it will be possible to sit up and make more rapid or noisy movements.

After the animal is well accustomed to being handled in the above manner, bring out the saddle and blanket. Place the blanket on the animal's back somewhat roughly. Repeat the process with the saddle, being careful not to allow the stirrup to bang against a leg on the off-side. Bounce the saddle on the animal's back and slide it forward and backward from neck to rump. When concern with the saddle is no longer shown, set it in place and adjust the cinch barely snug. If objection to the cinch occurs, manipulate its position until all objection ceases. Tighten the cinch until the saddle cannot be thrown, but not as tight as possible. Lead the animal around until no objection to the saddle is shown. A few days later, attach articles such as newspapers or burlap sacks to the saddle and repeat the process.

When the animal becomes used to wearing a saddle, it is then time to teach it to respond to the reins. With a saddle and hackamore in place, stand along side the animal and face in the same direction. Take the hackamore reins in hand and push the animal or otherwise encourage it to move forward. When it moves a few steps, pull on the reins, slack immediately and command "Whoa."

Repeat the process daily until the animal will stop by pulling on the reins alone. Teach the animal to turn by pulling on the left rein while slacking on the right rein. Repeat by pulling on the right rein while slacking on the left rein. Require only a few steps in the beginning and as the days go by, increase until the animal can be turned and stopped with ease.

The animal should now be ready to be ridden. However, it is recommended that the first riding take place in an enclosed corral. It is also important to remember that the process of training a wild horse or burro takes considerable time and procedures described above have been condensed into a few short sentences. For a more detailed description, read the following book from which the above procedures were taken:

Breaking and Training the Stock Horse, 1965 by Charles D. Williamson, The Caxton Printer, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho

Tips on Handling

Horses and burros are timid and may react violently when frightened. However, it is not necessary to fear the animals if common sense is used. Horses and burros require kind, gentle treatment. There are few vicious animals but they may become vicious if abused. Do not punish an animal except at the instant of disobedience. If only a minute transpires, the animal will not understand why it is being punished. Punishment should be administered without anger so that it will not be too severe.

In order to handle a wild horse or burro, the first requirement is to be able to catch it. Animals that are difficult to catch may result from the following:

1. They have not been handled enough to overcome their initial fear of man;

2. They have experienced bad or unpleasant treatment after being caught.

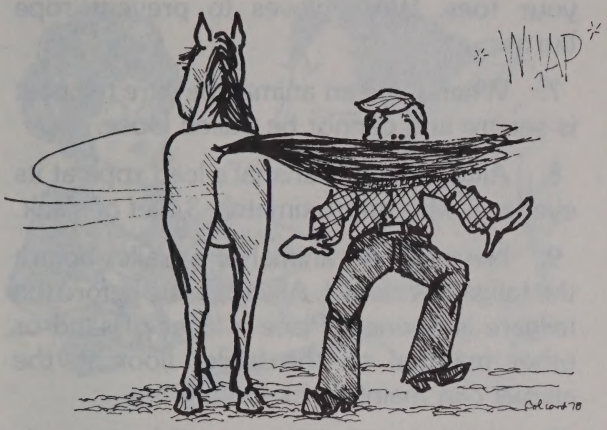
The best way to prevent an animal from becoming difficult to catch is to teach it that being caught is not a terrifying experience and in fact, has its rewards. For example, avoid using a grain bucket to lure an animal so that it can be caught. First catch the animal and then reward with a feeding of grain. This should establish a pleasant association with being caught rather than one of being tricked.

Loading horses or burros into a trailer or encouraging them to approach an object they fear can be extremely frustrating. A good way to acquaint animals with a trailer is to park it in the lot where they are being kept and feed them in a trailer. In addition, confidence can be instilled in animals by encouraging them to approach objects they fear. However, if they are concentrating on a strange object and are punished at the same time, they will assume that the object is the cause of the punishment. If an animal is whipped toward an object it fears, the situation will become worse rather than better. Patience in early training will develop confidence in the trainer and the animal should lose its fear of strange objects.

Horses and burros can be spoiled or "barn soured" by allowing them to run back to the barn or corral where they are promptly unsaddled and fed. This routine can even get an animal to where it becomes unmanageable on the way back to the barn. A good training method is to trot the animal when going away from the barn and make it walk when coming back. This will get the animal into the habit of trotting at a little bit slower pace and walking at a faster pace. Another useful technique may be to head the animal away from the barn when arriving home. Then dismount and lead it back to the barn.

Speed, quickness, and strength are some of the characteristics that make horses and burros especially useful to man. But these are characteristics that can also pose problems and dangers. Handling a horse or burro requires strong equipment and a good safe place to work. Dangerous, unmanageable situations should be avoided at all costs. Unmanageable situations are often avoidable by reading the emotions of a horse. Ears pinned backward can indicate anger or irritation and should warn the handler of the possibility of being kicked or bitten. Old animals will sometime fake anger if they have found that they can carry out a bluff by using it. One exception is that an animal will lay its ears back when running hard or otherwise putting a lot of effort into something. Ears forward show interest or suspicion. Some animals show interest in everything they see in new surroundings and generally are not fearful of the things that they see. Such animals maintain a good attitude and seem to enjoy what they're doing.

In summary, horses and burros are strong, sensitive creatures capable of speed and quick reactions. If the time and effort is taken to understand the animal, the rewards and satisfactions are well worth the effort.



Safety Tips

The following are some basic safety rules that should be part of the daily routine when working with horses or burros.

1. Never approach an animal directly from the rear. Even in a single stall it is possible to approach from an oblique angle.

2. Always speak to the animal before approaching or touching. Some animals are likely to jump and may kick when startled.

3. Always walk around the rear of an animal or far enough in front that stepping under or over the tie rope is not necessary.

4. If an animal is gentle, always work close to it. When near its shoulder it is impossible to be struck by the feet. Also the full force of a kick will not be received when working about the haunches or passing behind the animal.

5. If an animal is wild, always maintain a safe distance and keep an escape route available.

6. When working an animal, wear boots to protect the feet should the animal step on your toes. Wear gloves to prevent rope burns.

7. When tying an animal, be sure the post is secure and cannot be pulled loose.

8. Always tie the animal's lead rope at its eye level with approximately 3 feet of slack.

9. Never tie an animal in a trailer before the tailgate is closed. Always untie before the tailgate is opened. Place a layer of sand or other material on the trailer floor so the animal can maintain its footing.

10. Use a long lead rope and both hands when leading. If the animal rears up, release the hand nearest to the halter so balance will be maintained.

11. When leading an animal, walk beside—not ahead or behind.

12. Horses and burros are stronger than humans so don't try to outpull them.

13. Never wrap the lead rope, halter shank or reins around the hands, wrist or body.

14. Never tie an animal by the reins. An injured mouth or broken reins may result if the animal pulls backward.

General Care

Preventive medicine is the best way to keep a wild horse or burro healthy. At the time of adoption, many animals will be infected with moderate to high levels of internal parasites. Therefore, it is recommended that the animals be wormed as soon as possible after adoption. Local veterinarians can provide advice on the type of worm medication to use, including feed-additive wormers for use until the animal is sufficiently gentle for tube or paste worming.

In their natural habitat, wild horses and burros may not have been exposed to many of the infectious diseases that are common to domestic horses. If introduced into environments where there are or have been domestic horses, watch the wild horse or burro for signs of respiratory disease (running nose and eyes or coughing). If these should occur, consult a veterinarian. In addition, a yearly schedule of vaccinations

should be worked out with a veterinarian to prevent health problems later on.

Most wild horses and burros will have good feet at the time of adoption. However, in captivity the hooves will not wear as they did naturally and may also crack. Therefore, it will be necessary to periodically have the animal's feet trimmed. The frequency of hoof trimming and/or shoeing will depend upon the amount of wear encountered by the feet and the soil conditions of the corral. It will also be necessary to prepare the wild horse or burro for this experience by handling its legs and feet early in the training process. A reputable farrier should be consulted concerning hoof care and a regular program of hoof maintenance established.

Credits

Credit is hereby given to the following individuals and organizations who provided information, assistance and/or review of the contents of this brochure:

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